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Tenth and Commercial Streets,

ASTORIA, OREGON.

Consolation

By KEITH GORDON

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Through the stained glass above the palms and roses the midday sun streamed in, flecking the scene with gorgeous reds, blues and greens. It shed a golden glory upon the tall, slender, graceful bride, and at the sight the best man shut his jaw a bit more determinedly. She was looking more than ever like an angel, and in five minutes she would be the wife of his best friend. That was the monotonous sentence which kept repeating itself in his mind. As if he were likely to forget!

Opposite him and just behind the bride the maid of honor stood. For the moment she, too, had forgotten the guests, forgotten everything save the fact that the one man in the world whom she might have loved—for she always phrased it thus carefully to herself—was at that moment vowing to love and cherish his closest friend. She had a curious feeling that when she was an old, old woman, when a yellow, withered face and dim, and eyes looked back at her from her mirror, she should still be able to live over again the despair of this moment, when the white-robed clergyman was taking him from her life, a thousand times more irrevocably than death could have done.

There was a stir about her like the rush of the wind. For a second she was too lost in thought to understand; then, as she dropped upon her knees somewhat hurriedly, her bewildered eyes caught those of the best man, casually at first and then with a quick, startled recognition of something she saw there. He, too, had the air of a person suddenly awakened from a nightmare, momentarily uncertain of the surroundings in which he found himself.

A moment later she had forgotten his very existence. "He's Ethel's husband now—Ethel's husband," she said sternly to herself, skillfully turning a dry sob into a long, broken breath and composing her face to the radiant expression becoming the bride's best friend.

Meanwhile the best man admonished himself in a similar strain. "Steady now, old man! Now's the time to get out your happy smile." Then, as the rigid muscles of his face gave no indication of relaxing, his thoughts ran on crossly: "Don't be an ass! It's the worst ever, so you might as well cheer up!"

By the time the great organ pealed out the triumphant strains of the wedding march he and the maid of honor, their masks on, faced the guests that filled the church, ready to play their parts for all they were worth. Something in the music was at once an inspiration and a challenge.

"Isn't she sweet?" whispered one of the guests to a companion, referring to the maid of honor. "But how pale she is, and what a curious look there is in her eyes—sort of nothing can ever matter again expression—and yet!"

The speaker stopped, staring thoughtfully at the girl until she had passed. More than once during the course of the wedding breakfast that followed the best man found himself watching her curiously. No one was gayer than she—none so gay, in fact. Her eyes were brilliant, and her laugh rang out valiantly, but his own misery made him subtly conscious of some undercurrent of feeling that was running strong and pitiless under the surface bubbles—an undertow of misery that she was resisting with all her strength.

He remembered that when, during the ceremony, their eyes had met in that confused, unvelled glance she had been staring at the groom as intently as he had at the bride. Could it be? He did not formulate the thought, but he watched her more keenly than ever after that—so keenly, indeed, that once, unable to bear it any longer, with an appearance of unconsciousness she taxed him with it.

"You are very rude!" she said lightly, but at his grave, sincere "Believe me, I have not meant to be," and the searching look that accompanied it, expressive of a sympathy he could not put into words, her lips quivered ever so slightly. "Weddings get upon my nerves," she explained, with a little grimace, and before he could reply she had turned away.

The shower of rice and old shoes had spent itself, and the bride and groom had departed, taking all the romance of the world with them and leaving behind a monotony without form and void. All of the guests felt it, and already the bustle of departure was in the air. But to the best man and the maid of honor it was a ghastly, appalling fact that made them linger on the steps after the others had re-entered the house, staring blankly after the carriage that had disappeared around the corner. Then the man remembered where he was and pulled himself together with an effort.

"Seems rather like the end of things, doesn't it?" he observed as they turned into the doorway.

"From our standpoint, yes," was the listless answer. Then she caught her lip between her teeth and darted a quick, inquiring glance at him. That was not precisely what she would have chosen to say, and she hoped that he would not notice it. But at the sight of the somber smile in his eyes the hope passed.

In a snug corner of the deserted library, where the farewells of the de-

parting guests came to them but faintly, she next found herself, without being very clear as to how she came there. The best man was sitting in front of her holding one of her hands in a protecting, big brotherly fashion, while she vainly tried to keep back the tears that seemed to be rising as quietly and relentlessly as a flood. It was no use. Higher and higher they came. She winked hard and shut her teeth firmly. Then she snatched her hand away and covered her face.

"My poor little girl," murmured the best man softly.

"Weddings are always sad, don't you think?" she gasped out, dabbling at her eyes with her handkerchief and giving a little hysterical laugh. "Still, I don't usually behave like this. You see, when your best friend marries—she—that is—everything is different and—" She gave up trying to explain the situation in despair and ended with an incoherent, "But it's all very ridiculous, and I don't know why I should say all this to you."

She was the picture of helpless, girlish misery, and the best man's heart ached for her. Momentarily his sympathy took the edge off his own loneliness. He winced at the thought of her having to suffer alone the maddening sense of loss that tormented him.

"Perhaps it's because misery loves company," he said gently. "Perhaps you feel that this wedding hasn't been altogether like other weddings to me either," he went on, with a matter of fact air, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that they should be confiding in each other.

She was watching him with a dawning understanding in her eyes, and he met her gaze with a whimsical smile, as if he were offering her the open book of his soul to read if she would.

"Do you mean that you, too?"

There was no need to complete the question, for it was answered before it was spoken. Involuntarily her hands went out to him in quick, warm sympathy, and though her only comment was a breathless "Oh!" it was eloquent with feeling.

Little by little her composure came back to her.

"It was so good of you to tell me," she said gratefully. "I think I feel as Robinson Crusoe did when he discovered the man Friday."

"Not that I'm glad that you're unhappy, too," she added quickly; "only it doesn't seem so lonely now that I know that there is some one who understands. After all, that's what makes life worth living, isn't it?" She finished, looking up at him with what seemed to him the sweetest look he had ever seen in a girl's face.

When at the end of six months the bride and groom returned from their honeymoon abroad the best man and the maid of honor were among the first of their dinner guests.

"See here; it seems to me that you two have been making hay in our absence," laughed the bride, noting with a woman's quick instinct the deep, strong understanding that seemed to exist between the two, whereupon her listeners exchanged a somewhat humorous, albeit confused, glance, but refused to explain.

The following June they were married. Just before the Lohengrin march the organist played "Consolation," at which such of the guests as recognized the selection elevated their eyebrows and wondered. But the bride and groom alone were in the secret. It was a case of in memoriam.

The Professor's Love Story.

An amusing story is told concerning Professor Duncan of St. Andrew's university, who was in his younger days a teacher in Dundee. The embryo professor proposed to a lady, who curiously refused him. Shortly afterward Mr. Duncan became Professor Duncan, and the lady heard no more of him, not even by letter.

Some time after she went to St. Andrew's to try the effect of sea bathing. She saw Duncan often, and he talked to her on every subject except the subject she was now apparently interested in.

At last she courageously screwed up her courage and, coming to the point, said:

"Mr. Duncan, there was a subject you once mentioned to me some time ago, and really I am rather surprised that you have never returned to it, for I have changed my mind since that time."

The professor simply remarked: "Yes, but I, too, have changed my mind."—London Tit-Bits.

The One Who Was Mad.

A corpulent German came rushing in to the circuit court one morning before court was called and said:

"I want to get warrant for a man to kill a dog."

"Well, my man, you don't come to this court to get warrants in cases of that kind. If you want the dog killed you should go to a police court," said the judge.

The German started to leave, when the judge inquired in an interested manner:

"Did the dog bite you?"

"Yeas, he bit me."

"Well, was the dog mad?"

"Vas de tog mad? No. I vas madt."

—Buffalo Commercial.

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BIDS WANTED.

NOTICE FOR BIDS—ASTORIA, FEB-ruary 1, 1905.—Bids will be received for the grading and excavating for the new St. Mary's Hospital. Plan and specification may be seen at the office of the architect at St. Mary's Hospital. All bids to be on or before the 14th of this month. Right reserved to reject any or all bids.

NOTICE FOR BIDS—ASTORIA, OR. Feb. 10th, 1905.—Bids will be received until 12 o'clock m. on Feb. 10th for the construction of a two-story frame building; plans and specifications for which can be seen at my office No. 523 Commercial street. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids. T. L. BALL.

FOR SALE—REAL ESTATE.

HOUSE AND LOT FOR SALE OR rent near Young's Bay bridge. Inquire of A. E. Beard, 269 Grand avenue.

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A. O. U. W. Notice.

The members of Seaside Lodge No. 12, Ancient Order of United Workmen, are hereby requested to assemble at the next regular meeting of that lodge, to be held at 7:30 o'clock p. m. Saturday, February 18, 1905, to consider business of the gravest financial importance.

By Order of the Lodge.
Attest: F. D. WINTON,
Recorder.

Elks, Notice.

Astoria Lodge, B. P. O. Elks will give a ladies social on the evening of Tuesday, February 21, for the Elks and families and lady friends. The ladies' committee has arranged an elaborate program for the evening's entertainment and every member is requested to come.

Committee.

WHATEVER OTHERS MAY SAY.

the fact that 131,330 cases of G. H. Mumm's Champagne were imported in 1904 speaks volumes for its indisputable unsurpassed quality, being very dry, delicate, breezy, and clean in taste. Immense reserves of the superb 1898, 1899 and 1900 vintages guarantee maintenance of quality.

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